

## Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



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## Cougars Care about Land and Water Conservation

### The Member

Centennial High School's Environmental Science/Service Learning class, under the direction of Watson McCord, performs hands-on projects inside and outside the school. Through these projects, the students learn about the environment and the impacts people have on the environment. The class is broken down into student-led teams. Each team has specific environmental responsibilities, such as recycling, litter pick-up, nature trail, Green Team, and campus beautification. These teams identify and work toward their goals each year to create a better environment on campus and in the local community.

### The Story

The students worked hard to continue the TP3 Green Flag tradition at Centennial High. The project they chose this year was to install a rain barrel in the schoolyard habitat area and plant a butterfly and hummingbird garden. The Transition Program at Centennial High has special needs students that are now involved with weeding, watering, and keeping the habitat gardens looking beautiful. This spring, Service Learning students planted coreopsis, salvia, veronica, and a butterfly bush. Next fall, students from all classes should be able to study the insects, birds and bees attracted to the new plants. The class also purchased a rain barrel from the City of Franklin with a mini-grant they received from the Tennessee Environmental Education Association. Many students had never heard of such a concept, but were very interested. They worked with the School Maintenance Office to have the barrel installed to the existing roof drain. A lot of water comes off the roof, so an overflow drain comes off the barrel and goes back onto the ground. The rainwater can now be used to water the new plants.

### The Successes

This year, the Service Learning class spent time observing the inhabitants of the existing garden. They saw many species of birds feeding and noticed a pigeon take up residence in the garden. This spring, students found a robin's nest with 3 blue eggs in a bush and a bluebird sitting on her nest in one of the bluebird boxes. Next year, the Transition Program will use the 80-gallon rain barrel for a new cut flower program they are starting. The rainwater will be healthier for the plants and the soil than treated city water. It also saves the county money from sewer charges and water usage.

In addition, the students continued previous projects at Centennial. Despite difficulties with recycling containers disappearing from their marked location and the new hauler missing many pick-up days, the students persevered and ended a successful school year of recycling.

The nature trail started by previous classes continues to be a

maintenance issue for students every year. The nature trail group worked tirelessly to weed and control erosion. It was a daunting task, but the formation of a walking club proved helpful, and the track team also uses the trail for training. Students continue the beautification of the grounds at Centennial High. This year they chose to build a new sign for the baseball field. The old sign was wooden and in need of repair. The students built the new sign out of concrete and brick for sustainability, while learning basic masonry. Students continued two other Centennial traditions: the Carpool to School event and the Battery Collection. Both events were very successful, beating last year's numbers. This year, they had 450 cars with two or more riders, saving untold amounts of gas and air pollution. They also collected 1840 batteries that were sent to Household Hazardous Waste Day, keeping metals and acids out of our local landfill. Students picked up litter on the 4 adopted roads around the school and the school grounds. The students find a lot of trash, including fast food bags and cups, litter thrown from cars, and cigarette butts.

To maintain Performer status in TP3, the students were also required to do some mentoring and community outreach. To accomplish this, the Green Team, comprised of 9 students, went to the local elementary school, that eventually feeds into Centennial, and taught three second grade classes (59 students) lessons about clean air, hazardous materials, energy conservation, water conservation, and waste reduction. Each one-hour class consisted of a lesson and a project. For the clean air class, a native Tennessee Ninebark was planted outside each of the three classes. The bushes are doing well. The lessons were comprehensive, and the teachers requested them again next year. The hands-on projects that were completed by the second-graders were displayed in the public library. Our class was asked to do a 15-minute segment on Air Care TV, sponsored by the Clean Air Partnership of Williamson County. The students were asked to talk about TP3, the above-mentioned work they have done, and what it takes to maintain Performer in TP3. The program goes out to 54 counties.

### The Pollution Prevented

The pollution prevented resulted from the 450 cars that carpooled, the 1840 batteries that were kept out of the landfill, over 7000 pounds of paper that was recycled, the sustainable sign, the plants and shrubs that were planted, the 80-gallon rain barrel, the adopt-a-road litter pickups, and the hundreds of thousands of people that will see Air Care TV and learn what they can do to help the environment. However, most important are the life-long lessons that these students learned by "doing". They gained a new understanding of what it takes to make a difference in their world.

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